

Roosevelt Base, Recreation and Bowling Alley  
(Building No. 20)  
Corner of West Virginia Street and Richardson Avenue

Long Beach  
Los Angeles  
California

HABS No. CA-2663-N

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROOSEVELT BASE, RECREATION AND BOWLING ALLEY (Building No. 20)

HABS No. CA-2663-N

**Location:** Corner of West Virginia Street and Richardson Avenue,  
Naval Station Long Beach,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California.

USGS Long Beach Quadrangle (7.5'), Universal Transverse Mercator

Coordinates: 11.384840.3735210

**Significance:** The Roosevelt Base Historic District, constructed in 1940-1943, consists of 11 buildings designed in the International Style with Mediterranean Revival detailing, five structures, and extensive historic landscaping. It is eligible for the National Register for its site planning, landscaping, architectural style, and its Associate Architect Paul Williams, a nationally prominent Los Angeles Afro-American architect. Additionally, the District is significant for its association with the buildup of permanent Naval facilities on the Pacific Coast under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during the mobilization period preceding the United States' entry into World War II.

Building 20, a former lounge and bowling alley for enlisted men, has been so extensively altered over the years that it no longer retains its original architectural integrity as an International Style building.

**Description:** Exterior. This large irregular-shaped building, facing north and east, measures 135' x 198'2". It has a reinforced concrete pile foundation, and reinforced concrete walls of varying thickness with a smooth textured concrete finish.

A flat-roof wing to the west housing the bowling alley is constructed of concrete tilt-up panels. Its main (north) entrance is decorated with native stone veneer, blue and white tiles, and a widely-overhanging canopy supported on overscale concrete pylons. The large flat-roof one-and two-story additions to the east, housing the clubs, are also constructed of tilt-up concrete panels. The main (east) entrance to the clubs, on West Virginia Street, is reached by a flat-roofed recessed porch, up five steps, supported on six decorative concrete posts. The south side, fronting on Richardson Avenue, is the service area, with various concrete one-story enclosures for mechanical equipment, a loading dock, and secondary entrances to the clubs.

The majority of the doors and windows are modern aluminum-frame with large plate glass panes and transoms. The service doors are metal or wood. The east wall has eight portholes. The single feature remaining

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from the original building is a 24-pane window wall, identical to that in Building 22, hidden behind a decorative concrete screen to the east of the bowling alley entrance.

Interior. The original structure had a total gross floor area of 12,897 square feet, that has been greatly expanded. This interior space, with new additions, is divided into dining rooms, bars, a banquet room, a theater, snack bar with take-out service, galley, bowling alley, game room, Mariner's Club, and offices. Flooring is wall to wall carpet in the bowling alley, banquet room, and offices, parquet on the dance floor, and black and multi-colored linoleum tile in the bathrooms, the snack bar, and the dining room. The interior stairs to the second floor are carpeted with varnished wood and metal railings. The walls are smooth plaster covered with wall paper or painted. The building has dropped textured ceilings with fluorescent lights.

Alterations. Both exterior and interior additions have completely altered the original structure. The original building was an irregular T-shaped one-story building with the top of the T anchored to the arcade, and the base of the T forming an east wing with an entrance fronting on West Virginia Street. In 1964 a high one-story wing was added on the west side, containing a 16-lane bowling alley, offices, men's and women's toilets, a lobby, a snack bar with a take out window, and storage and game rooms.

Between 1968 and 1971, two new additions were added on the east side of the original building, completely engulfing it. The addition to the north of the original game room became the Mariner's Club with a bar with a seating area, a dance floor with a stage, a lobby, and men's and women's toilets. The original game room was changed to a dining room, with a food bar. The original game room lobby (east entrance) was extended; original doors were replaced with aluminum-framed double glass doors that open to a concrete porch with a series of landings, steps and railings to the sidewalk of West Virginia Street. The south section of this east wing addition has two floors. The first floor has a large kitchen with a loading dock at the south side, a gabled-ceiling dining room, and a new game room. On the second floor is the Chief Petty Officers' Club with a small theater, a coat room, a kitchen, a large banquet room with a bar, a dancing floor with a stage and an outdoor patio deck. The original 6-lane bowling alley closed in 1988 and its pine wood floor was covered with wall to wall carpet and became part of a game room.

Surroundings. Building 20 is surrounded on the north by the Arcade #234 and its paved concrete patio courtyard and to the south by Richardson Avenue. To the east is West Virginia Street and to the west in a parking lot.

**Historical Context:**

The construction of the Building 20 was part of a plan to provide recreational and administrative facilities for the Pacific Fleet anchored in San Pedro harbor. The construction of this complex was part of a nationwide military effort to replace deteriorating World War I temporary buildings with new permanent facilities to attract and retain post-war peacetime forces. Rather than using a standard design from the Bureau of Yards and Docks, the Navy, through Allied Engineers, hired local civilian architects Adrian Wilson and Paul R. Williams. As a result the buildings, designed in the International Style with Mediterranean Revival details, are unique to the Base.

Construction of this complex, named Roosevelt Base, took place between 1940 and 1943, and cost \$18 million, funded by Congressional appropriations. Included were the gymnasium (23), squash/handball courts and locker rooms (22), a swimming pool (233) and tennis courts (221), arcade (234), lounge and bowling alley (20), officers' club (24), and fleet landing building (10), administration building (1), dispensary (2), fire station (3), central heating plant (4), labor board building (41), gatehouse (40), and main gates (gate 1), and a net pier (pier 7, structure 126), and extensive landscaping.

Although designed in 1940 as recreation facilities for personnel of the Pacific Fleet, the complex was not used initially for this purpose. In response to Japan's increasing belligerence toward China, President Roosevelt, (for whom the Base was named) ordered the fleet from San Pedro Bay to Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii to serve as a deterrence and warning. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Base was rushed to completion; new temporary barracks were constructed, and the facilities were used during World War II as support for a Small Craft Training Center and as the administrative center of the Naval Operating Base in Long Beach.

Built in 1942 at the cost of \$125,851, building 20 was used as a Recreation and Bowling Alley. The top of the T had a lounge room and a fountain lobby. The south section had a pine wood six-lane bowling alley. The leg of the T contained a game/billiard room with 14 pool tables. The new bowling alley and the snack bar are still in use, but most of the building is currently vacant.

After World War II the facilities, renamed Naval Station Long Beach, were used to support the U.S. Navy ships' personnel either homeported in Long Beach or in drydock for repairs at the adjacent Naval Shipyard. In 1991 the Naval Station was listed for closure as part of the national Base Re-Use and Closure activities as the Department of Defense down-sized at the end of the Cold War. In 1994 the Base officially closed, although a number of buildings are still in use.

**Sources:**

Architectural drawings #18165, #18166, #18167, #18169, #18187, #18188, #18189, #18192, #18222, #18223, #18225, and #18209 are located at Building 300, Long Beach Naval Shipyard archives. A microfilm copy of original elevations and sections, architectural drawing 1248-34-217, is located at Building 20, Naval Facilities, Engineering Command, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, California.

**Project Information:** This HABS documentation project was undertaken as a mitigative recording required by the Memorandum of Agreement, dated \_\_\_\_\_ 1996, signed by the City of Long Beach, the California State Preservation Officer and the Navy. The Navy proposes to transfer the Naval Station property to the City of Long Beach. The City, through the Port of Long Beach, plans to demolish all the buildings and structures on Roosevelt Base for a container terminal.

The documentation was prepared by Alexandra C. Cole, SAIC, Santa Barbara, architectural historian and Fermina B. Murray, historian, in May 1996. Large-format photography was done by William B. Dewey of Santa Barbara, California, in April 1996.

